

COMING INTO FOCUS:
EDUCATOR AND COUNSELOR PERCEPTIONS
OF GAY AND LESBIAN YOUTH

MASTER'S THESIS

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Robert M. Butts, Jr.

School of Education
UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON
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Official Advisor

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Study

Multicultural education believes that schools and classrooms are places of hope where students and teachers gain glimpses of the kind of society we could live in and where students learn the academic and critical skills to make it a reality.
(Bigelow, Christensen, Karp, Miner & Petersen, 1994)

Education, as viewed from the mainstream perspective in America, predominantly reflects the philosophy of the cultural majority (Hardman, 1990). It is the perception that most people in American society are not physically challenged, racially or ethnically different, or economically disadvantaged, and do not share alternative orientations. The major cultural influence on American institutions has been the White Anglo-Saxon, Protestant (WASP) perspective (Golnick and Chinn, 1990). However, the United States is exceptionally rich in the many distinct cultural groups that make up the population, and these groups share in both the American macroculture and their specific microculture. Grouped together, these multicultural groups comprise a large component of American society, and hence, the modern classroom.

The experiences of persons who evolve from the majority are quite different from those who evolve from diverse populations. Giroux (1988) states that school culture functions not only to confirm and privilege students from dominant classes, but also, through exclusion, to disconfirm the histories, experiences and dreams of subordinate groups. Multicultural education aims to create a more just society and schools that are more inclusive and representative of the diversity of our nation. It grew out of the civil rights movement and sought to educate all people regardless of ethnicity, race, language, social class, religion, gender, sexual orientation, ability and any differences (Nieto, 1996). Forty years ago, students of color, the poor, women, and students with disabilities experienced verbal and physical harassment, lack of protection, counselors that lacked

training regarding their needs, and a non-inclusive curriculum that did not reflect their culture. Students with exceptionalities had few options and services to this population were sporadic and selective. In the late 1950's, there was an increase in the number of public school classes for mildly retarded and emotionally disturbed children. Later, *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954) became the cornerstone on which all legal developments protected the rights of the disenfranchised, including the disabled (Russo and Talbert-Johnson, 1997). This legal decision began the movement to provide all students the opportunity to an education and was followed by monumental legislation guaranteeing the right to an education for students of all disabilities.

When the civil rights era expanded the need for ethnic studies, universities responded with courses and degrees in specific ethnic group studies. Later research indicated that promoting cultural diversity could best be achieved through educating the dominant culture in the history, culture, and contributions from the subordinate groups (Pohan and Bailey, 1997). Educators responded by expanding existing curricula to include perspectives of cultural groups through literature, history, music, and other disciplines integrated throughout the regular school program. Later, multiethnic education (Gollnick and Chinn, 1990) was expanded to include various microcultures to which individuals belong, with an emphasis on interaction with the dominant culture. Multicultural education promotes learning about multiple cultures and their values. Sleeter and Grant (1993) outline some common purposes and goals of multicultural education. These include:

1. Combating a narrow and/or monodimensional curriculum; affirming and legitimizing the presence and contributions of diverse groups;
2. Creating a climate that promotes an appreciation of diverse peoples, values, perspectives and ways of life;
3. Reducing prejudice and working toward the elimination of discrimination in

teaching and society;

4. Working towards equality and justice for all;
5. Respecting the rights and dignity of all individuals;
6. Supporting pluralism within the educational system; and
7. Broadening and/or diversifying the values schools promote: race, culture, native language or disability.

The challenge of recognizing and valuing diversity is a major issue in our society. Educational institutions have been called to recognize that a school is composed of many different communities. According to Butler (1994), the diverse constituencies represented include students of color, low income, socio-economic status students, differently abled students, gay and lesbian students and students of varying ethnicities. Yet to have representations of diverse students is insufficient. As Moses (1990) suggests, it is necessary to apply “the model of cultural pluralism in which diversity is valued to structure the educational institution in a way that facilitates cross cultural learning among the many segments of the school...”(p 403).

Schools need to broaden and question the assumptions and expressions of bigotry (Fischler, 1992), so that differences may be seen as resources for living and molding the society of tomorrow. More than ever, educators have the responsibility to provide all students equal access to education (Butler, 1994). As school populations become more diverse, the educator population has remained relatively homogeneous. Zimpher (1989) describes the typical teacher education student as a white middle class female, who grew up in a rural or small town, attends a school which is close to home, and has “limited geographic aspirations’ for the future. Currently 88% of the K-12 teaching population is white and 68% are women (Center for Educational Statistics, 1989). Many have little knowledge or experience with other cultural groups to negotiate differences in the classroom. Gay and lesbian youth are one such cultural group. School personnel may

have insufficient knowledge about this group.

Statement of the Problem

Gay and lesbian students are systematically discriminated against in schools. Educators have little knowledge about this population and avoid discussion of these students and their issues in classroom training. Media literacy in classrooms and schools may provide alternatives to traditional practices to aid gay and lesbian students explore their emerging sexual identity. The purpose of this study is to: (a) determine counselor, preservice and inservice educator perceptions of gay and lesbian youth; (b) identify interventions that are currently utilized for gay and lesbian youth; and (c) explore media literacy (e.g. cyberspace, television and other media) as an alternative strategy in addressing the needs of gay and lesbian students.

The following research questions will be addressed:

1. What are the perceptions of preservice and inservice educators regarding the educational experiences of gay and lesbian youth?
2. What are the current educational and counseling practices utilized for gay and lesbian youth and are they effective in addressing their needs?
3. Can integrating media literacy throughout the curriculum impact the learning experiences of gay and lesbian youth?

Assumptions

To conduct this study, a Likert-based survey was used to ascertain preservice and inservice educators as well as school counselor's attitudes and perceptions about gay and lesbian youth. Counselors were also questioned about the presence of interventions for gay and lesbian students in their schools. Open response questions about the media portrayal of gay and lesbian persons were also included in the survey. The writer assumes these instruments were reliable.

Limitations

There are several limitations that may affect this study. Some counselors may perceive this research as esoteric, since they may assume there are no gay or lesbian students in their school system and respond by disposing of the questionnaire. Many counselors and educators may not respond because of religious bias or cultural bias against the gay and lesbian community.

Definitions of Terms

Gay - affectional orientation toward a person of the same gender. Usually refers to a male with a homosexual orientation.

Lesbian - affectional orientation of a female toward a person of the same gender.

Heterosexual - affectional orientation toward a person of the opposite gender.

Closet - sexual orientation undisclosed within the context of an individual's personal and public arenas.

Sexual Orientation - deep-seated direction of one's affection and attraction toward the same gender (homosexual), opposite gender (heterosexual), or both genders (bisexual).

Bias - not leaving the mind indifferent.

Homophobia - irrational fear, dislike, anger, or intolerance of homosexuality, bisexuality, gay men, lesbians, or bisexuals. Can be both personal or institutional prejudice and often results in acts of discrimination (Pohan and Bailey, 1997).

Heterosexism - the institutional and societal reinforcement of the belief that heterosexuality is better and more natural than homosexuality or bisexuality; the presumption that everyone is heterosexual.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter provides a review of the literature regarding multicultural education, perceptions and attitudes of educators regarding gay and lesbian students, perceptions of counselors regarding gay and lesbian students, systematic discrimination and isolation in schools and media literacy opportunities as an effective tool in the education of gay and lesbian youth.

Multicultural Education

Recognizing that too many children in this country were not receiving an equal educational opportunity, many voices rose up demanding that schools address the needs of those groups who had traditionally been denied access and representation in the educational process (Pohan and Bailey, 1997). Education was reaffirmed as a right and not a privilege by the US Supreme Court in the landmark case of *Brown v. Topeka, Kansas Board of Education in 1954* (Hardman, Drew, Egan and Wolf, 1990) which began the modern civil rights movement. Various groups began to challenge existing laws which infringed on the civil rights of handicapped groups, particularly persons with mental retardation. In 1971, legislators in Pennsylvania ordered all schools to provide free public education to all developmentally disabled children, ages six to twenty-one, commensurate with their individual learning needs. In *Mills v. District of Columbia (1972)*, schools were ordered to provide free and appropriate education to every school age handicapped child. The court further stated that if public schooling was not appropriate to the child's needs, alternative educational services must be made available. In 1975, the United States Congress passed a comprehensive national public law which combined various parts of state and federal laws. Public Law 94-142 made available a free and appropriate public education for all handicapped children in the United States. This law contains four major components; nondiscriminatory and multidisciplinary assessment of educational needs; parental involvement in developing each child's

educational program; education in an environment suited to individual needs and an individualized education program (IEP).

The authority of Public Law 94-142 was later expanded under Public Law 99-457 by establishing a new mandate to provide free and appropriate education for all handicapped children ages three through five and defined a new early intervention program for infants and toddlers ages birth through two (Hardman, Drew, Egan and Wolf, 1990). Later in 1996, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), (amended Public Law 99-457) to assure that all children with disabilities have available to them ... a free, appropriate public education which emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs (Russo and Talbert-Johnson, 1997). IDEA added several key components including: the creation and development of an IEP (individualized education program) team for the development and review of the individualized education program; implementing a multidisciplinary team for assessment, evaluation, referral and eligibility of a student for special education classes; a due process hearing to resolve disagreements in placement, identification and evaluation; child find, which identifies unserved students in need of special education; guaranteed confidentiality for personally identifiable information about students; and non-discriminatory assessments where students are not penalized for their race, culture, native language or disability. Under IDEA, transition services are also required and are defined as a coordinated set of activities for a student, designed with outcome-based processes, which promote the movement from school to post school activities, including post secondary education, vocational training and integrated employment, independent living, adult services or community participation.[PL101-476, Sec 602(a) (19)].

The civil rights movement also brought a renewed interest in ethnic studies, discrimination, and intergroup relations. Early educational programs were ethnic specific, with often only one ethnic group studied. With the growth and development of

ethnic studies came the realization that those programs alone needed to educate students from the dominant culture about the history, culture and contributions of the other ethnic groups. Multiethnic studies expanded school curricula by representing contributions of both ethnic and dominant group cultures. Students were exposed to perspectives of ethnic groups through literature, history and music and other disciplines integrated throughout the school program (Gollnick and Chinn, 1990).

Other groups that had suffered from institutional discrimination were also identified. These groups included persons with low-income socioeconomic status, women, the bilingual and the aged. Educators responded by expanding multiethnic education to a more encompassing concept - multicultural education. This broader concept focussed on various microcultures to which individuals belong, with an emphasis on the interaction of membership in those cultures, especially race, class and gender (Gollnick and Chinn, 1990).

Multicultural education seeks to extend to all people the ideals and rights that were originally meant for only an elite few (Banks, 1993). Recently, the National Association for Multicultural Education (NAME) added its name to the list of professional organizations that are addressing the needs of gay and lesbian youth, while multicultural scholars have broadened the umbrella of multiculturalism to be inclusive of sexual orientation. Yet, with “few exceptions, most school districts fail to acknowledge or serve the needs of gay, lesbian, and bisexual students, parents and staff” (Goodman, 1996, p 10).

Discrimination against gay and lesbian youth in our schools manifests itself in a systematic manner. Many school boards are hesitant to enact supportive policies for gay students due to misguided assumptions about homosexuality and/or pressure from special-interest groups, (e.g. conservative organizations) and usually there are no anti-discrimination policies in place to protect gay and lesbian teachers (Dennis and Harlow

1986). In the classroom “a conspiracy of silence” exists in which curricula and texts often do not contain accurate and positive information about homosexuality, even within health texts (Sears, 1991). The common response of most educators to any discussion of homosexuality is avoidance. School counselors generally do not offer supportive and confidential counseling to gay and lesbian youth due to a lack of training, fear of controversy or personal homophobia (Gibson, 1989). These students have no school role models because the majority of gay and lesbian teachers do not self-disclose out of fear for their job security and the potential harm (Pohan and Bailey, 1997). Lesbian and gay students have no recourse when harassed, nor have teachers been trained to ensure these students’ safety.

The systematic pattern of discrimination places a significant number of adolescents at risk, not only of school failure, but also personal and social crises (Walling, 1993). On a national level, a 1993 federal study estimated that one-third of all youth suicides were committed by gays and lesbians (Remafredi, 1996).

Current estimates of the number of gay men and lesbians in the United States report that between three and seven percent of the population is homosexual (Janus and Janus, 1993). This means that over 7,500,000 persons in this country are gay or lesbian. It is therefore virtually certain that an educator will encounter several gay and lesbian students, colleagues, administrators or parents in the course of his/her practice.

It is evident that schools need to address homosexuality in the learning environment and begin to incorporate non-discriminatory practices, affirming curricula, and positive role models to reach this at-risk population. Increased media attention to this issue has spawned many discussions about homosexuality. Within schools a unique approach for educating gay and lesbian students may be obtained by incorporating media literacy throughout the entire curriculum. Signorile (1994) documents the increased use of online chatrooms as a safe environment for youth to question and explore sexual

identity issues. These chatrooms are places where health issues, dating and conversation about growing up gay are offered to youth. Television and other visual media continue to explore gay and lesbian characters and life experiences of gay people. Recent educational videos on gay issues in schools have broken new ground (Chasnoff and Cohen, 1997) in educating students about gay and lesbian people, their history, and the societal pressures they have experienced.

Serving *all* students is the goal of every educator and counselor. Lesbian and gay youth seek respect and recognition from their peers, educators and counselors. It is critical for educators and counselors to learn more about and strive to reach this at-risk population (Pohan and Bailey, 1997) so they are no longer the objects of discrimination in our schools.

Educator Perceptions and Attitudes

Homophobia, as defined by Weinberg (1972), is an irrational fear of homosexual persons. This definition has been expanded to include disgust, anxiety, or anger toward gay and lesbian persons (MacDonald, 1976). Cultural taboos, fear of controversy, and homophobia have kept the educational community silent on the subject of homosexuality (Uribe and Harbeck, 1992). Herek's research (1984) summarized negative attitudes toward homosexual people, citing consistent demographic patterns observable across groups, finding that people with the most negative attitudes about homosexuality report less personal contact with gays and lesbians. Later studies by Gentry (1986), Maddux (1988), Schneider and Lewis (1984) and Weiner (1989) supported Herek's findings in the examination of other professionals.

Several studies reveal that educators have little knowledge about homosexuality, accepting many of the myths and avoiding the topic as much as possible (Harbeck 1992). Sears' (1989) seminal study on Southern preservice educators and counselors' attitudes about homosexuality and homosexual persons and how these attitudes are actualized in

the schools, reaffirmed that educators lack the sensitivity, knowledge, and skills to address the needs of these at-risk students as well as gay and lesbian colleagues. The study showed that prospective educators pursuing certification in elementary education were more likely to express homophobic feelings and anti-homosexual attitudes than those planning to teach in the secondary schools. Sears utilized Hudson and Ricketts' (1980) Index of Homophobia (IH) and determined that one third of prospective educators sampled (N=252) harbored negative feelings toward gay and lesbian persons and scored in the "high-grade homophobia" range.

In the second portion of Sears study, preservice educators were asked how they would respond as educators to situations relating to homosexuality in terms of classroom interaction, student harassment, counseling, gay and lesbian fellow teachers, and human rights. Despite the samples that previously reported negative attitudes about homosexuality, prospective educators were willing to treat homosexual students and colleagues fairly. Classroom discussion and curriculum integration were the least-chosen areas of projected activity (24% and 29%, respectively). It was also reported that prospective educators were reluctant to work with an openly gay or lesbian colleague (52%). In addition, 25% felt that a homosexual person should not teach in the public schools.

Sears (1992) study explored the relationship between preservice educators' and counselors' professional beliefs and personal feelings about homosexual students and homosexuality. He found that educators can adopt a professional, non-judgmental demeanor concerning homosexuality and gay students, but few of them are willing to become personally involved in meeting the special needs of gay and lesbian students. His surveys indicate that a high percentage (78%) of future educators were willing to halt verbal harassment of gay and lesbian students, and to attend school-sponsored workshops related to homosexual students. He notes:

“The degree to which prospective teachers assume a proactive role in meeting the needs of homosexual students and creating an environment of respect and support for them is clearly related to the educators’ personal feelings and beliefs. At best, teachers who are knowledgeable about the social, medical and legal issues related to homosexuality will more likely treat those students of suspected sexual difference fairly and with respect. Deep-seated personal beliefs about this issue govern the type of personal involvement that these professionals expect to have with homosexual students” (p 67).

With the exception of attending a school-sponsored workshop on strategies for dealing with lesbian and gay students, only a minority of the sample (19%) expected to participate in any other activity. Teaching about homosexuality, classroom discussion and curriculum integration, were the least chosen areas of projected instructional activities. Sears concludes, “Few of these preservice educators believe this group of largely invisible, at-risk students merit special attention or assistance” (p 70).

Butler’s 1994 study examined preservice educators’ knowledge, attitudes, and behavior regarding gay men and lesbians in a Human Diversity in Education course. Good, Biddle and Brophy (1975) cite extensive research to support the claim that teacher attitudes not only affect student performance but student attitudes as well. A non-homophobic educator will transmit those attitudes to her/his students, consciously and unconsciously. This 1994 study measured preservice educator homophobia using four different instruments. Herek’s Attitudes Toward Gay Men and Lesbians (ATGL) scale measured homophobic attitudes; factual knowledge about homosexuality was assessed using Franken’s (1987) Homosexual Information Scale (HIS); educator specific attitudes regarding gays and lesbians was measured using a modified version of Sears’ (1991) Professional Attitude Index (PAI); Anticipated Educator Behaviors (AEB) was measured using a scale comprised of the six remaining items in the PAI (which measure behaviors),

combined with the eight items of Sears' (1991) checklist of perspective teachers expected professional activities (Butler, 1992).

The results indicated significant relationships between preservice educator knowledge and general attitudes regarding gay men and lesbians, knowledge and educator-specific attitudes, and knowledge and anticipated educator behaviors. These relationships suggest that those who have more factual knowledge about gay men and lesbians are more likely to hold positive attitudes and exhibit more positive behaviors as educators are. Butler's summary states that among preservice educators, there is a lack of knowledge about homosexuality, and that misinformation is prevalent, since a high percentage of incorrect responses alluding to stereotypes regarding gay men and lesbians was reported.

In addition, participants were presented with a checklist of activities in the AEB, in the classroom, and society in general. The following is a summary of the results: 28% would not discuss homosexuality in the classroom, 59.5 % would not support barring discrimination against homosexual men and women; 23.8 % would not attend a school sponsored workshop on working with gay students; 33.3 % would not prepare educational materials for students interested in homosexuality; 40.5% would not prepare a resource packet on homosexuality for teachers in their school; 26.2 % would not discuss concerns of gay students at a faculty meeting; 38.1 % would not engage in dialogue with parents about homosexuality at a school sponsored program; 30.9% would not meet with homosexual adults to learn more about gay students' special needs; and 52.4% would not integrate homosexual themes into the curriculum.

Homophobia among inservice and preservice educators is a concern considering how attitudes directly and indirectly affect students. Carefully planned and implemented formal instruction may be helpful in changing negative attitudes towards diversity in sexual orientation. There is a growing body of literature that supports education as a

response to homophobic attitudes (Anderson, 1981; Butler and Byrne, 1992; Kilmann, Wanlass, Sabalis and Sullivan 1981; Serdahely and Ziemba, 1984; Boss 1980).

Interestingly, successful interventions have taken a cognitive, affective or combination of both (Butler, 1994). Omrod (1990) describes cognitive interventions that include lecture, discussion, review and some audiovisuals. These interventions tend to focus on knowledge acquisition and transformation. Affective intervention strategies include speaker panels, role plays, simulations, small group discussions, case studies, debates, poetry and photographs (Beane, 1990). Introducing this topic in preservice curricula may be the most effective method to enable future educators to interact more effectively with gay and lesbian students, colleagues and parents they will encounter throughout their teaching career. Also, these educators will create an environment that nurtures the social and intellectual growth of these at-risk students. Moreover, early educational interventions for these educators will encourage them to attend workshops, make and shape policy changes and provide an inclusive curriculum for all students (Butler, 1994). Finally, a solid, factual knowledge base may help educators respond to emotional or biased arguments with logic and truthful information as they deal with conservative groups (Sobocinski, 1990).

It is apparent that educators need more training to address the needs of gay and lesbian youth. Educators need accurate information to provide direction to gay and lesbian students, and to develop policies for inclusive and safe education for all.

Counselor Perceptions

Gay and lesbian youth are a silent and isolated population that has generally been overlooked by the counseling professions. These youth come from every ethnic, religious, and cultural background. What they share is the experience of growing up being alienated from, yet shaped by the social institutions, roles and norms of their larger society (Gerstel, Feraios and Herst, 1989). Current estimates of the number of gay men

and lesbians in the United States report that between three and seven percent of the population is homosexual (Janus and Janus, 1993). This also means that there are approximately three million young people between 10 and 20 years of age who are predominately or exclusively homosexual (Deisher, 1991). This number represents a significant minority within the school counselors' caseload and bears closer examination. Fontaine (1998) in her study of school counselors (n=101) at elementary, and junior or senior high schools were surveyed about counseling experiences with adolescent homosexuality. Ninety-three percent of the respondents at junior and senior high had contact with students dealing with sexual identity issues. Moreover, 21 percent of elementary counselors had seen students with these concerns. Of the total participants, 37 percent reported counseling gay and lesbian youth who had either attempted or contemplated suicide. Robinson (1989) reports that most high school counselors recognize that in their caseloads there are students for whom the issues of sexual orientation may be central, but few programs address the needs of these students. School counselors may avoid confronting issues of sexual orientation because of two factors; homophobia and institutional discrimination.

Grammick (1983) defines homophobia as the irrational fear of homosexuals, and attributes it to the lack of services to gay and lesbian persons of all ages. Herek's (1984) seminal work on adult attitudes towards homosexuality led to research on attitudes towards homosexuals in a number of different professions, including mental health professionals, physicians, nurses and pastoral counselors (Casa, Brady and Poteroto, 1983, Davison and Wilson, 1973; De Crecenzo, 1983; Douglas, Kalman and Kalman 1975; Garfinckle and Morin, 1978; Gantrell, Kremer and Brodie, 1974).

Dulaney and Kelly (1982) report that a study of a multidisciplinary urban social agency revealed homophobia on all levels. Social workers scored highest on homophobic elements followed by psychiatrists and psychologists. A later study by

Sears (1989) explored school counselors' and preservice educators' professional attitudes and personal beliefs and experiences about homosexuality while working with gay youth in South Carolina. The typical respondent was a white native South Carolinian in her late thirties, with a master's degree and ten years counseling experience. Among Sears' findings were that two thirds of the counselors sampled expressed negative attitudes and feelings toward gay youth. Sears also reported that counselors with less homophobic feelings were those with friends or relatives who were homosexual in their orientation. When compared to educators, counselors expressed greater negative attitudes and feelings about homosexuality. Interestingly, his findings revealed that sixty percent of the sample knew an openly gay or lesbian student, yet less than one quarter of these counselors had chosen to provide students with information about homosexuality or to participate in programs to expand their knowledge about this sexual minority. Sears asserts that while personal attitudes and feelings can change, much of this bias will be projected into counseling these students.

The second part of his study examined how these professionals balanced their personal beliefs about gay youth and homosexuality with their professional attitudes in the counseling environment. The vast majority of counselors observed that few, if any, of the schools' educators were supportive of gay and lesbian students, discussed homosexuality in the classroom, or considered it an alternative orientation (Sears, 1989). In this climate, it is noteworthy that four percent of the sample had discussed homosexuality or issues related to homosexuality or had counseled students (high school juniors and seniors) about their sexual orientation. Most guidance counselors reported knowing at least one homosexual student during their professional career. These school counselors also indicated a willingness to participate in supportive activities, yet those involving the counselor more personally were less appealing. Few felt prepared to work with this at-risk population yet juxtaposed with their exposure to gay and lesbian

students, less than one fifth of the counselors has sought to expand their knowledge about homosexuality. This paradox is a common thread in the literature on counselor beliefs about homosexuality, where often the counselor is torn between professional beliefs and a lack of experience and training in counseling gay and lesbian youth, even though many admit to knowing such youth. As Rudolph (1988) notes:

“He or she is formally told one thing from the professional community (e.g., ‘homosexuality is OK’) and more informally and pervasively from society at large (‘homosexuality is not OK.’). This mixed message presents a great risk of danger to a gay client, since the counselor may be completely unaware of his/her homophobia or heterosexist bias” (p 167).

The needs of the client for social support and personal development must be separated from the therapist’s personal judgements and values, as homophobia could cloud his or her clinical assessment and potential interventions.

Robinson (1989) cites three factors that contribute to counselor homophobia. First, school counselors view sexual orientation as the primary cause of problems in gay students versus a typical explanation as causative (e.g., poor grades). Second, many therapists view gay and lesbian persons as more pathological than heterosexuals, even when given identical descriptions of clients. Finally, counselors often view homosexuals as having a broader range of psychopathology than do heterosexuals, despite evidence to the contrary (Benvenuti, 1986). There is a great need for school counselors to understand and support these troubled youth. Considering educator avoidance and school counselors lack of experience, it is possible the special needs of gay and lesbian youth will not be met.

All schools can take steps to insure that gay and lesbian students succeed by insuring that the school environment is safe for everyone. Other schools have taken leadership in the form of training for teachers, providing them with accurate information.

Stover (1994) describes school programs that reach gay and lesbian youth around the country. New York City's Hetrick - Martin Institute provides training to educators that focus on teacher and student prejudices and strategies to support gay and lesbian youth. Frances Kunreuther, Institute director states, "Our biggest enemy is ignorance--a lot of teachers have never met a gay person and have no training on this population. Telling a gay youth 'its a phase your going through' reinforces the isolation that plagues gay students. I can't emphasize how much one accepting voice can change a youngster's life" (Stover, p 29). Another program in San Francisco's city high schools provides a teacher or counselor identified to talk to gay and lesbian students. 'Gay and lesbian friendly adults' as they are known, are available to students having issues with sexuality. Fairfax County schools in Virginia have integrated a unit on homosexuality in their family life curriculum, utilizing a video *What If I'm Gay*. A homework assignment requires students to discuss the lesson with their parents. The best developed program for gay and lesbian students is Los Angeles Unified School District's Project 10, an extensive school-sponsored program involving teacher training, counseling for students, and discussion of gay issues in the curriculum. Virginia Uribe, founder of Project 10 claims that the most helpful feature of the program are the in-school discussion groups that help gay students realize they are not alone. Such discussion groups exist in 20 of the 50 high schools in Los Angeles. Uribe states that establishing special programs may not be in the cards politically. But until society has resolved its attitudes towards gay and lesbian persons, responsible educators, counselors and administrators will have to quietly help gay students find the help they need (Stover, 1994).

Systematic Discrimination in Schools

Institutional discrimination occurs against gay and lesbian students on two levels: within graduate school curricula and at the professional level. Few universities offer course work on gay and lesbian persons as a significant minority, despite evidence that

gay people comprise as much as ten percent of the population (Janus, 1994). Preservice counselors and educators have little if any preparation for dealing with gay students. Unfortunately, questions about sexual identity are not asked, nor is any information provided. Another element of Sears' (1992) study surveyed high school students' attitudes on homosexuality. He found that 48% of the high school students surveyed reported knowing few or no teachers who were supportive of homosexual students. Another 47% had no idea of their teachers' views on homosexuality. Only 8% of the students reported that their teachers had ever discussed gay and lesbian issues within the context of any classroom discussions (Pohan and Bailey, 1998). Avoiding these issues sanctions invisibility of gay and lesbian students and discriminatory practices.

The most predominant feature of the discriminatory school environment is the failure of school officials to provide protection from peer harassment and violence (Dennis and Harlow, 1986; Governor's Commission on Gay and Lesbian Youth, 1993). Of the 289 secondary school counselors surveyed, 54 percent strongly agreed that students are very degrading toward fellow students whom they discover are homosexual, and 67 percent strongly agreed that homosexual students are more likely to feel isolated and rejected (Price and Telljohan, 1991). Additionally, 45 % of the males and 20% of the females surveyed reported having experienced verbal or physical assaults in secondary school because they were perceived to be gay or lesbian. (The Governor's Commission on Gay and Lesbian Youth, 1993)

Sears (1991) suggests another discriminatory practice that needs to be addressed is the present "conspiracy of silence" that envelops most schools. In the majority of schools, neither curriculum either in sex education classes or library resources provides students with accurate and positive information about homosexuality. Current AIDS education frequently reinforces the message that gay relationships are unhealthy (Freiberg, 1987). As with people of color 40 years ago, gay and lesbian youth have no

sense of history and historical role models. Identifying role models within schools is still a concern since the majority of gay and lesbian teachers face grave consequences, (e.g., job security, physical and verbal abuse) if they disclose their orientation.

Since gay and lesbian issues are still considered taboo by many parents, few counselors are willing to approach this subject. Robinson (1994) reports a common concern is that counseling minors on issues of sexual orientation somehow condones or encourages a gay identity. More often, the opposite is true. Benevenuti (1986) reports that it is more likely for a counseled homosexual person to experience a heterosexual identity than a homosexual one, even when this identity does not appear to be in the interest of personal integration. Exploring issues related to sexual orientation in adolescence is not likely to be a determinant of adult orientation, since research shows that self-identified homosexual adults believe their orientation developed before they reached puberty (Robinson, 1994).

School administrators further enable systematic discrimination by failing to enact anti-slur or anti-discrimination policies that address sexual orientation. Efforts by conservative groups to prohibit schools from sponsoring gay and lesbian support groups result in a void of services for this at-risk population. In 1996, the Salt Lake City Board of Education banned students from forming a Gay Straight Alliance group on campus in reaction to pressure from religious groups. Pohan and Bailey (1998) note that a strong, united educator voice was silent during this action.

Ignored by counselors and educators, and fearful of peer and community reprisal, gay and lesbian youth rely on trusted friends and themselves for guidance, and often fail to find a voice of affirmation in themselves or friends. Lee Fearnside describes his struggle for self-esteem growing up gay in rural Massachusetts and offers an insight into the alienation gay and lesbian students feel during high school:

I felt completely isolated from my family and friends. It appeared that I was the

only one who ever had these queer feelings. I couldn't come out to anyone. After all who would associate with anyone who was sick and deranged as I thought myself to be, if they knew the truth. Not only does society shout at me that I am evil, but an inner voice whispers it as well (Massachusetts Governor's Commission on Gay and Lesbian Youth, 1993).

Isolation and Anonymity

One third of all youth suicides are committed by gay and lesbian youth. (Massachusetts Governor's Commission on Gay and Lesbian Youth, 1993). Anderson (1994) states that gay youths commit suicide because of deep fears about their own identity as well as a lack of role models. He decries the school culture of silence as "psychosocially crippling, since students are deprived of opportunities to develop self esteem that become second nature for heterosexual students. Fear of discovery can be paralyzing to their sense of self" (p 151).

Robinson (1994) cites five key areas which gay and lesbian youth face the greatest challenge: isolation, family issues, violence, sexual abuse, and sexually transmitted diseases. Isolation for gay youth occurs on three separate planes. Cognitive isolation occurs when students experience an almost total lack of accurate and positive information available to them. Social isolation is evident due to the invisibility of homosexuality. An adolescent who is African-American, Jewish or Latino is not at risk to be thrown out of his/her family or scorned by peers or shunned by his/her religious community. Clearly a gay or lesbian youth is a unique minority because of this invisibility. But the most damaging plane of isolation is emotional isolation. Gay youth feel *internally* they are abnormal, have no one to talk with, and totally alone.

Family issues for gay youth range from deep fears about discovery of their orientation by family members and subsequent expulsion from home, to violence within the home. Most parents readily admit a lack of coping strategies for understanding their

gay children (Muller, 1987). Much of the violence that occurs in the family setting usually results from attacks by parents and siblings (Hetrick and Martin, 1988). Unlike other multicultural groups, gay and lesbian youth are rarely the same sexual orientation as their parents, and feelings of alienation are common. Whatever the age of sexual orientation awareness occurs, it is followed by long periods of quiet internal emotional struggle. Homosexual adolescents are often left alone to grow up in a lonely, unfriendly world, and during their adolescent years they often build an invisible world between themselves, their parents, school counselors and many of their peers (Powell, 1987).

Gay and lesbian youth are also subject to a higher incidence of violence in the school setting, 40% higher than their heterosexual counterparts (Matthison, 1997). Gay students face isolation, fear, and often violent interactions with other students. In a 1992 study conducted by the American Association of University Women, it was found that anti-gay slurs were the most feared (and most common) form of verbal harassment in schools. A Harris poll released in June 1993 reported that 86% of high school students said they would be very upset if classmates called them gay or lesbian (Anderson, 1994). Offensive language such as *faggot* often goes unchallenged. Countless gay students have been harassed and are often victims of physical, emotional, and sexual abuse. In 1996, Jamie Nabozny filed a one million dollar lawsuit against the board of education in Ashland, Wisconsin after school principals during middle school and high school refused to come to his aid when he was attacked in school for being gay (Walsh, 1996). This case was one of the first lawsuits that held school officials responsible for harassment of homosexual students. Nabozny alleges that school officials in Ashland failed to respond adequately to his complaints about frequent physical and verbal abuse in both junior and senior high school. One school official, the suit claimed, told Nabozny to expect harassment if he was going to be openly gay in high school (Walsh, 1996). U.S. Court of Appeals Judge Jesse Eshbach wrote that evidence in this case supports Nabozny's claim

that school officials violated his 14th Amendment right to equal protection under the law. “What is more,” the judge wrote, “Nabozny introduced sufficient evidence to show that the discriminatory treatment was motivated by the school’s disapproval of Nabozny’s sexual orientation, including statements that Nabozny should expect to be harassed because he is gay” (Walsh 1996, p 1).

There have also been some gains in schools and emerging support groups for gay and lesbian youth. Massachusetts, Wisconsin and Connecticut have laws banning anti-gay bias in public schools (Meyer, 1999). The Archdiocese of Minneapolis-St Paul has developed a support program for gay and lesbian high school students that provides counseling and encourages integration of the topic of homosexuality in religious education and health classes. Heterosexual and homosexual students are creating gay-straight alliances in over 400 cities across the country, according to the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN), where only 150 existed in 1998.

As a result of the isolation and emotional abuse in their lives, gay youth are particularly vulnerable to attacks and are often sexually abused. The Hetrick-Martin Institute for Protection of Gay and Lesbian Youth report that 20% of their clients have been sexually abused. Concomitant with increases in sexual abuse are higher incidences of sexually transmitted diseases. Ross (1987) reports that younger gay men (under the age of 22) have shown to be significantly more likely to contract sexually transmitted diseases than older gay men.

Gay and lesbian adolescents struggling with their sexual orientation find themselves in a society with little support. Home and family, cornerstones of support for youth, are not often a safe place for them. School, the other primary institution where all young people should feel safe, may not be a safe place for homosexual youth. Gay and lesbian youth are an at-risk student group that encounters systematic discrimination in our schools. New ways of reaching these students need to be investigated.

Media Literacy Opportunities

Media literacy is defined as “embracing the skills through which a person is able to access, analyze, evaluate and communicate information in all its forms, including print and nonprint (Considine & Haley, 1999). As late as 1992, no widely accepted definition of media literacy existed, and there was no clear reason why media literacy was important to American educators, students or school curricula. Yet a consensus was forming. Neighboring Canada’s Association for Media Literacy had made significant strides in incorporating media literacy (ML) within their own school curricula. In Australia, media literacy had been long established under the guise of ATOM (Australian Teachers of Media) and produced several significant publications and study guides for various forms of media.

But the real impetus for inclusion of media literacy for American school curricula was the current school reform movement, coupled with perceived media excesses that seemed to focus entirely on sensational, bizarre and violent events. Considine & Haley (1999) state that the zenith of this excess was the trial and acquittal of O.J. Simpson in what was perhaps the most sensational murder trial of the 20th century. Journalistic publications criticized their own industry, placing the blame on the “media feeding frenzy” possibly due to a decline in journalistic standards, while citing the profit motive as the key causative factor.

In 1992, the Carnegie Council on Adolescent development published *Fateful Choices*, describing the role mass media plays in influencing attitudes and behavior of children and adolescents. *Fateful Choices* indicated that “by age 15, one quarter of all adolescents will engage in behaviors that are harmful and dangerous to themselves or others” (p 2). A US News and World Report survey (1996) found that the public was becoming increasingly concerned regarding media messages and their potential impact. It also indicated that two thirds of the country thought that television shows have a

negative impact on the country (Impoco, 1996). Others were also being affected by the *distortions* of the media. The document stated that if the media were part of the problem, media literacy was part of the solution. *Fateful Choices* concluded “teenagers find themselves under a barrage of media messages delivered by TV, radio, and pop music. Sadly, schools have hardly begun to teach them how to view and listen critically”(p 120).

Growing interest in media literacy became a major thrust of both reform minded educators and influential educators of the newly elected Clinton administration. TheodoreSizer, a leader of the education reform movement acknowledged the growing power and presence of television as “the biggest school system, principle shaper of culture ...powerfully influencing youth on what it is to be American...what we need is to change the very nature of what it is to watch TV” (Considine & Haley, p 4). Assistant Secretary of Education Madeline Kunin at a symposium with educators at the University of Georgia, stated that if indeed media influences behavior, then educators must develop young minds which can block out, analyze and evaluate media. What they need, she concluded, is a clear awareness of how the media influences, shapes and defines their lives (Considine, 1995). Media literacy’s impact began to reach both circles of influence as well as classroom educators who sought to respond to the growing influence the mass media had over youth. Richard Riley, secretary of education, signaled his support for media literacy, suggesting that media literacy courses give young people the power to recognize the difference between entertainment, bad television and information they need to make good decisions.

Integration of media literacy into existing curricula and preservice training became the thrust of a Harvard School of Education think tank in 1994. Educators and experts in the field of media literacy explored components of American, German and Canadian curricula. Of particular note were those courses and competencies that were linked to existing state mandates, guidelines, and state-established competencies. Many

of the curricula submitted, consistently contained goals and objectives that addressed media influence and the need for critical viewing and thinking skills. Other curricula required students to explore diverse print, non-print and technological forms of communication and themes by which these influence people (Considine, 1995). Yet it was the health/wellness curriculum that would spark real interest in advocating media literacy as a response to concerns on how the media influences behaviors, particularly those involving drug, alcohol, and tobacco use among youth. Health and Human Services Secretary Donna Shalala's office later distributed a publication to schools across the country, titled *Substance Abuse Prevention Strategy: Media Literacy Skills*. Shalala reported that being "literate in today's society requires more than knowing how to read, write, or do arithmetic...teaching your students to be critical thinkers about media messages can help them...resist the temptation to become users." Media Literacy was recognized nationally and was a growing part of the national educational agenda. However there are critics. Cited too often as a study of television, media literacy transforms educators from information dispensers to learning facilitator and focuses students on critical thinking skills, analysis and problem solving, rather than rote memorization and drill. Formal research shows that a media literacy curriculum has most promise in the area of health education. Austin and Johnson (1997) describe an effective program where third graders were taught critical viewing skills to deglamorize alcohol advertising. They reported both an immediate and delayed effect in increasing students' understanding of the persuasive nature of this advertising. In Massachusetts, a lifeskills curriculum targeted at juvenile offenders addressed violence substance abuse and racism in the adolescent community using media literacy curriculum. Independent evaluators of the program reported that the program might be deterring destructive activity in some of the participants evidenced by both quantitative and qualitative results. "It gave me time to think about the consequences, one student told evaluators (Considine & Haley, 1999, p

2). While media literacy is no panacea for all social problems, educators and researchers are carefully looking at methods, portfolio assessments and outcome documentation of media literacy efficacy. In the United States, the New Mexico Media Literacy Project and Appalachian State University's Reich College of Education have nationally recognized programs to introduce and train educators, administrators and community members. Both programs have a formalized core curriculum, with literacy, technology and instruction as key components. The New Mexico State program was evaluated independently and evaluators noted that the project was able to document how their program either directly or indirectly positively impacts students through the efforts of teachers, administrators and community members. (NMedia Education Newsletter, 1996, p 1). Appalachian State's ML program consistently received strong support for course content, concepts, and competencies (Considine & Haley, 1999).

Critical Thinking

Media literacy teaches students to access, analyze and evaluate information from both print and electronic media, and to communicate using a variety of media. Integrating media literacy into school curricula complements multicultural educational efforts by teaching students to critically examine ideas, whether expressed in a textbook, video, television show, or popular film. It also teaches them to recognize bias, illogical reasoning and all forms of propaganda (Trampiets, 1999). Most importantly, media literacy teaches students how to think critically and how to produce creatively. It gives them a voice and affirms that their insights and ideas are valuable and deserve others consideration. The learning environment where media literacy is taught is an environment where the insights and opinions of others are received with an open mind and treated with respect. These opportunities for creative expression can free gay and lesbian students from being invisible in the classroom and school. The following is an example of how this creativity can free students. Samantha Gellar, a young lesbian high

school student in Charlotte North Carolina learned the value of creative expression through media. Her play, *Life Versus the Paperback Romance* was judged a winner in the local Young Playwrights Festival. Her play dealt with lesbian love and the competition's sponsors declined to present the play, deeming it inappropriate for middle and high school audiences. Gellar received a \$100 prize and later produced the play through the local repertory theatre. If I had the choice, I would give it all up to have it performed at the Festival just so the message would be put across that there is nothing wrong with being gay or lesbian (Stockwell, 1999).

Using media in the classroom is a way of enriching the text and teacher-centered curriculum in most of today's classrooms. Television, video and the Internet offer gay and lesbian students the possibility of role models, as well as information and networking with other gay and lesbian students. These media can offer a less threatening atmosphere and allows issues relevant to gay persons to be examined and discussed. The award winning video, *It's Elementary: Gay Issues in the Classroom*, has been hailed as an excellent primer to teach students, educators and parents the injustice of prejudice, using age appropriate, concrete examples of ways others are different, and how intolerance hurts all persons. Television's current gay characters, Perry Marks of *Party of Five* and Will Truman of *Will and Grace* allow gay youth to see gay men and lesbians portrayed positively in the media, while safely providing opportunities for dialogue with friends and family.

Considine (1999) cites Marshal McLuhan's landmark volume *The Medium is the Message* as the call to integrating media literacy in schools as well as everyday life. Considine suggests that schools must enter the new millennium preparing our students and citizens to confront, comprehend, and control the information technology that shapes the way they see themselves and their world.

"Gay and lesbian people," Dyer (1984) explains "grew up isolated not only from

our heterosexual peers, but also from each other. We turned to the mass media for information and ideas about ourselves."(p 192).

The need for effective interventions for gay and lesbian youth challenges the field of education to think beyond the traditional environment that includes a media literacy approach in conjunction with the traditional classroom curriculum. Inside the classroom there are resources which can both repress the thoughts and feelings of gay youth and liberate them from isolation. New technologies could be the safe school space that gay and lesbian students need. Today's classroom is rich in media, from channel one to the cyber galaxy of the Internet. The media, particularly film, television and cyberspace, may provide effective interventions for gay youth, or at least provide positive examples of role models. Gay and lesbian students benefit from this vital technology in post-modern America. Youth have access to an unprecedented amount of information at their keyboards and modems, freeing them from isolation and giving them freedom to explore who they are and to discuss their feelings with others in an open media. Cyberspace affords them this opportunity to explore and expand their vision while addressing issues on mental health, sexual identity, and socialization, thus providing them with information about gay life.

Cyberspace

It is no coincidence that the development of Northern California's Silicon Valley roughly parallels the development of the gay rights movement, and that both thrived in the early seventies in the liberal political climate of that region (Signorile, 1994). Many of the prominent gay leaders in the computer companies ascribe their gravitation toward computer work to sublimate their sexual energy during their closeted years (Signorile, 1994). The introduction of the modem allowed thousands of closeted and openly gay people to debate, to communicate, and to discuss issues related to homosexuality. Jonathan Rotenberg, a child prodigy of computers at the age of 17, first began his journey

as a gay man exploring gay bulletin boards. Later, Rotenberg saw the parallels between computerphobia and homophobia, understanding that those persons exposed to computers have no fear of computers and applied this principle to homophobia and homosexual people (Signorile 1994). What resulted from his work was an audiotext system that aides people and provides information for gay and lesbian youth and others seeking safe, accurate information about homosexuality. This exciting technology was packaged and is used at many gay and lesbian community centers throughout the country.

In 1998, 17 million youth ages 2-18 were online. It is predicted that number will grow in five years to more than 42 million (Okrent, 1999). The Internet can open new worlds that may not be desirable areas of exploration. Chatrooms and websites can be unsafe, where encounters with pornography, violence, and hate groups can easily occur. Okrent (1999) reports that 45% of youth surveyed state that their parents know next to nothing about the websites they visited. Educators and parents can track emails, and monitor web sites and Okrent (1999) lists several ways to screen as well as track youth activity online. America Online allows parents to limit incoming email to a finite list of correspondents. Most email programs have a mailing list option to scan senders' addresses, and parents can track where students travel on the Internet through following their contacts and visiting the sites themselves. Many pornographic sites can only be accessed through revealing credit card numbers, yet access to chatrooms may present special problems. Clearly admonishing youth from revealing personal information is critical to safe chatting. "Parents and educators can tell youth that revealing personal information is like taking candy from strangers" (Okrent 1991, p 41). Students may also be restricted to monitored channels where "kids only" accounts block young users from non-monitored rooms and prescreened sites for youth.

The world of computers and the Internet offer gay and lesbian youth a voice that can connect them with other gay youth, challenge a stereotype in a chatroom or learn

more about what it means to be a healthy person who happens to be gay or lesbian.

Films

Vito Russo's (1981) *The Celluloid Closet* chronicles the story of homosexuality in the movies describing both the stereotypes and stories of gay and lesbian people portrayed in film. Russo states that American films have treated gay and lesbian people as a curse or a joke. The sissy or unidentified male gay character was often more feminine than the heroine, while lesbians were masked as cross-dressing bisexuals, planting furtive kisses on unsuspecting women during the early years of film. Films in the late 1940's portrayed homosexual persons as psychopaths, murderers or nonexistent. *Suddenly Last Summer*'s never seen Sebastian lured men to himself using an unsuspecting Elizabeth Taylor, while Shirley MacClaine's lesbian character commits suicide over her attraction to Audrey Hepburn's character in *The Children's Hour*. Russo's (1981) study cites 32 films with major homosexual characters between 1961 and 1976, 13 feature gay and lesbian characters who commit suicide and 18 films have the homosexual character murdered by another character (Gross, 1994).

It was Mort Crowley's *Boys in the Band* that opened the 1970's with a glimpse of the lives of ten gay men living in New York City. These characters were noteworthy because they did not commit suicide nor murder each other by the end of the movie. The newly formed National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF) advocated accurate depictions of gay and lesbian people and pressured the film industry to stop portraying gay men and lesbians only in a negative manner. The gay and lesbian culture, open affection between characters, and issues of discrimination and oppression were not addressed in films at this time (Fejes and Petrich, 1995). Anti-homosexual epithets were found in most major films from 1970 through 1980 (Fejes and Petrich, 1995). Independent film companies did explore the complexities of gay and lesbian life, sexual relationships and issues of race and culture. Examples of these films include

Tongues Untied, *Times of Harvey Milk*, and *Swoon*. Hollywood's major studios did not address the subject of AIDS until the early 1980's, while independent films *Parting Glances* and *Longtime Companion* dealt with AIDS in an affirmative manner.

Philadelphia, a film about a gay man with AIDS was the first major film addressing the specter of the disease. Gay audiences questioned the complete lack of physical affection between the dying main character and his life partner (Fejes and Petrich, 1993). Recent films such as *Birdcage* and *In and Out* feature gay characters and were received extremely well by the public.

Hollywood has seen the value of diversifying characters and has steadily increased a gay presence in films. Crossover films, where gay and lesbian characters are mixed with heterosexual characters seem to be the most popular. Both television and film have tapped into this concept, mixing in a gay best friend in *Blast from the Past*, or a lesbian police detective in *The Deep End of the Ocean*. Yet few major film studios will produce an entirely gay or lesbian plot or theme (Kilday, 1999). Since media are businesses (Worsnop, 1994), a smaller market determines what films will be made. Certain films will play well in the top 12 cities, however those addressing the lives of gay characters tend to be few in number.

Independent film companies have been the major producers of gay and lesbian theme films. These films draw a specific audience and usually play well in large cities and less in rural areas. The average profit for independently produced gay and lesbian theme films is about 2 million dollars, and deal with the topic of homosexuality in a frank and honest manner. Current films of value for educators and gay youth include *Times of Harvey Milk*, a documentary on the life of the first openly gay supervisor in San Francisco and *Tongues Untied*, which addresses the coming out process for a variety of persons in different cultures.

Television and Video

Ninety eight percent of all US households have a television set. By the time the average child reaches 19, he or she will have spent more time watching television than doing anything else besides sleeping (Liebert & Sprafkin, 1988).

Milton Berle's drag routines of the 1950's were the first depictions of an element of gay culture on early TV although Berle himself was heterosexual. Later televisionsissy men (Billy de Wolfe and Paul Lynde) gave some comic relief to the gay serial killers, lesbian pedophiles and psychotics of *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* and *Playhouse 90*. These unfortunate media characterizations came under fire as gay and lesbian viewers formed watch groups to monitor the mass media. During the 1970's GLAAD (Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation) was created and battled networks over episodes of popular shows such as *Marcus Welby* and *Police Woman*. *That Certain Summer* (1972) was a groundbreaking television production, where a married man grappled with his homosexuality while painfully telling his family. Surprisingly, the show did not depict gay males in a stereotypic manner. Other shows introduced gay characters, but were often placed in the context of a problem for other characters, while comedies often reverted to stereotypes of gays males only, making lesbians invisible (Fejes and Petrich, 1993).

Montgomery (1981) describes three approaches to homosexuality in entertainment television. First, the program had to be in a popular genre category. Second, the story was required to focus on the reaction of the heterosexual lead to the gay character. Finally, there were to be no displays of affection, which might offend viewing segments. ABC's 1981 docudrama about AIDS, *An Early Frost*, is an example of how an approach was applied. This show fits a favorite TV genre, the family drama. Also, *An Early Frost* is not about AIDS, but how a family comes to grip with guilt about a homosexual child. Second, the gay man with AIDS was a wealthy white handsome

lawyer, who was not flamboyant and acceptable to heterosexual audiences (Weiss, 1986). No physical affection was displayed between the gay man and his partner of five years, in order to avoid any viewer offense. This made-for-TV drama was typical of the lack of depth and character that gay and lesbian people were portrayed on television during the 1980's.

The advent of AIDS also changed the context for homosexual representation on television. AIDS and its implicit link with the gay male community brought forth issues of gay male sexual behavior. The Reagan-Bush presidency brought political and religious conservatism to the forefront of the media, often manifested through boycotts led by conservative groups against sponsors of perceived pro-gay television images. These factors pressured network executives to avoid gay and lesbian theme programming and characterizations, in order to avoid any loss in market share of audience, (Kielwasser and Wolf, 1991).

The 1990's have been a decade in which gay and lesbian media visibility has increased markedly. Mitch Semel, vice-president for programming at Cable Network, states that gay TV is not far off, but there will never be a watershed event, but a slow and steady build (Hudis, 1996). Ellen Degeneres' disclosure of her character's ("Ellen Morgan") and her personal lesbian orientation was a major media event occurring in April of 1997. Gay and lesbian groups hailed this episode as historic, while conservative groups sent letters of disapproval and led boycotts against sponsors, particularly the Disney Company, which was the parent company of the network sponsor ABC. Degeneres' character and personal disclosure disregarded Montgomery's (1981) filters by dealing with issues vitally important to the gay and lesbian community from an exclusively lesbian perspective, with physical and emotional intimacy portrayed lovingly and realistically. In 1997-98 the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) reported that a record 30 gay, lesbian and bisexual characters appeared in

prime time broadcast television shows (Epstein, 1999). Advocates for the gay and lesbian community claimed that this historic number of characters signaled America's increasing appreciation of the lesbian gay and bisexual community as a part of their lives. In 1999, GLAAD reported that more than 25 gay and lesbian characters appeared on prime time television, including seven whom appear regularly in situation comedies and dramas on six networks.

Greater visibility does not, by itself, qualify as social acceptance or even as an end to discrimination and violence. While gay weddings on television shows like *Roseanne* and *Friends* boost Nielsen ratings, state legislatures enact legislation that invalidates gay unions and Congress passed the Defense of Marriage Act, codifying an exclusive conception of family as federal policy (Lancaster, 1996). Recent statistics on hate crimes against gays and lesbians released by the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Organizations indicated that hate crimes have increased since 1997 by three percent in 11 major cities (Kidder, 1999). The recent murder of Matthew Shepard reiterates that increased visibility does not prevent discrimination or stop violence. This increasing visibility of gay and lesbian persons does not go unnoticed by conservative groups. These groups are concerned that television shows with gay and lesbian characters are changing the value systems of children. What is true is that many of television's gay and lesbian characters are more youth-directed. ABC's *Dawson's Creek* and NBC's *Will and Grace* both have gay characters that are younger and authentic. Warner Brothers network's *Felicity* creator J.J. Abrams believes that the more television portrays real persons telling their truth, the better we are. Thus, the more homosexuality is portrayed in episodic television, the more it becomes a nonissue (Epstein, 1999). *Will and Grace*'s producer John Mutchnick claims the reaction of gay and lesbian youth to homosexual characters is particularly powerful. "We get many letters that say 'I was able to come out to my parents because when they met Will Truman, they realized for the first time that

gay people could be like that and that they thought there would be hope for me as their son” (Epstein, p 64). *Dawson’s Creek* character Jack McPhee is based on series creator Kevin Williamson’s own adolescent experience. McPhee is open about his orientation to his *Dawson’s Creek* family and friends and is seen dating men on the show. Advocates for lesbian and gay youth hail this as important. Not only does it allow gay youth to see that it doesn’t cost them everything to be true to themselves, but also it lets straight kids see that it is acceptable to be friends with a gay person, says Cole Rucker, director of the Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Center’s transitional living program for homeless youth. Rucker also sees the great importance of the message these characters embody. “I have received many, many calls and met youth who come in and say they were thinking about committing suicide until they saw “Ellen” come out of the closet. Obviously, they (the show’s producers) are trying to entertain their audience, but they are truly saving the lives of young people when they present positive images on television” (Epstein, p 67).

Recent videotapes focusing on gay youth include *Out: Stories of Gay and Lesbian Youth* and *Gay Youth* (1994) both feature interviews with gay and lesbian teenagers discussing depression, guilt and shame interspersed with discussion of the subjects’ family problems, peer harassment as well as comments from supportive parents. These films depict the struggle of gay youth, while also providing insights to fellow students about the importance of accepting and valuing differences. The subjects interviewed in *Out: Stories of Gay and Lesbian Youth* have all endured family problems and harassment, although some parents in the film are openly supportive of their gay and lesbian children. *Gay Youth* features two major subjects that are a study of contrasts. The first subject is Bobby Griffith who was reared in a Christian fundamentalist family and inculcated with a belief that his homosexual feelings were evil in the eyes of God. The shame, guilt, and self-loathing he feels are climaxed in his suicide in 1983. His mother recounts the events of his life, later realizing the role narrow religious intolerance played in his death. Gina

Gutierrez was a student at the same high school and came out at the age of 16. Her mother and stepfather struggle with her lesbianism and came to deal with her as they would any headstrong daughter, with a mixture of apprehension and encouragement. In the final scene Gutierrez graduates, and receives the Bobby Griffith award for courage on gay and lesbian issues.

As media literacy continues to be included in standard school curricula, educators can utilize a thought provoking videotape such as *It's Elementary: Gay Issues in the Classroom*. This unique production gives all students a chance to learn about gay and lesbian people in the context of videotape. This video offers a window into what really happens when educators address lesbian and gay issues with their students in age-appropriate ways. Rarely do adults have the chance to hear what children already know about gay people and about the concerns and questions on their minds. The tape discusses how several different elementary schools have approached discussing gay and lesbian issues with children. The goal of the film is to encourage parents and teachers to have a dialogue with children. Debra Chasnoff, principal filmmaker, specifically avoided any reference to sexual practice. Comments by children participating on camera indicate that many have already had some exposure to the subject of homosexuality. *It's Elementary* debuted in June 1999 on public broadcast systems across the country. Several conservative groups have denounced the tape, while other groups see it as badly needed in light of the recent Matthew Shepard and Billy Ray Gaither murders. Debra Chasnoff was inspired to make the film when her oldest son was about to begin elementary school, "I was really concerned about the information he would receive at school."

Recent reviews of the video are positive. If schools are serious about preparing students for the future, we have to help them handle the diversity that exists in our communities. By addressing gay issues, we will prevent violence and foster equality.

comments Carolyn B Sheldon, President American School Counselor Association (Chasnoff and Cohen, 1998). Other professionals have praised this tape as groundbreaking...schools cannot be neutral when we are dealing with issues of human dignity and human rights. I'm not talking about tolerance. I'm talking about acceptance. *It's Elementary* is a great resource for parents, teachers and community leaders working to teach respect and responsibility to America's children, (Chasnoff and Cohen, p 1).

In conclusion, media literacy teaches students how to think critically and produce creatively. More importantly, it can provide gay and lesbian students, and all minorities, a chance to express their ideas using a variety of print and electronic media. While a relatively new field, media literacy provides them a voice and affirms their insights are valuable and deserve others' consideration. Lesbian and gay youth can see themselves as a part of slowly emerging culture, one in which they will be affirmed, valued and respected as the new millennium approaches.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the subjects, setting, procedures and data collection methods employed during the fourth quarter of 1999. Subjects for this study were counselors and both preservice and inservice educators from Montgomery County, Ohio. Data was collected using surveys mailed to participants' homes of schools. Surveys were completed and returned using a self addressed stamped envelope to the researcher's home.

Subjects and setting

The subjects for this study were counselors and both preservice and inservice educators in Montgomery County, Ohio. Preservice educators (N=40) were surveyed from the University of Dayton's Department of Teacher Education. Inservice educators and counselors as well were surveyed from the following school districts, Dayton, Miamisburg and Kettering.

The schools included in the study were middle and high schools from the aforementioned districts. The schools were comprised of grades 5-8 for the middle schools and 9-12 for the high schools. The community consisted of a mixed work force.

Procedures

During the fourth semester of the school year, the researcher surveyed middle and high school educators in the Dayton, Miamisburg and Kettering school districts. Prior to the distribution of the survey, the researcher met with administrators to: (a) share the intent and focus of the research investigation; (b) to determine whether school district policies required modifications to be made to the development of the survey; and (c) to receive permission to survey teachers and counselors in the school district. Cover letters (See Appendix A) were developed and attached to surveys and mailed to participants in the respective districts, after revisions were made. Surveys were mailed to educators' and counselors home addresses using school directories provided by the Human

Resources department. One school requested that surveys be sent only to educators at their respective schools and the researcher heeded the request. To ensure an optimum response rate, a self-addressed stamped envelope was included in the survey packet that was mailed to educators and counselors. Due to the sensitivity of the subject matter, precautions were taken to insure the confidentiality of the data. These measures included coded questionnaires and self-addressed stamped envelopes, return addressed to the researcher's home.

The researcher surveyed the preservice educators during the month of March. The preservice educators were enrolled in the EDT 390 course, Educating Diverse Student Populations in Inclusive Settings. The researcher provided directions to preservice educators regarding completion of the survey. After directions were provided, preservice educators were given fifteen minutes to complete the survey. Most students completed the survey within ten minutes. The researcher collected the surveys and thanked the students for their cooperation. Forty preservice educators were surveyed.

Each subject in the three (preservice, inservice educators; counselors) groups completed a questionnaire that was specifically developed to address perceptions about homosexual students, interventions for gay and lesbian youth and the potential for media literacy as an intervention strategy. A modified version of Sears (1989) Index of Homophobia (IH) was examined as described in Sears (1989).

Data Collection

Construction of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire was constructed using information gathered from a review of the literature, thereby establishing content validity (Sears, 1989). A field test of the questionnaire was conducted by veteran educators and counselors prior to general distribution of the surveys to the teacher and counselor sample. The instrument used a

five point Likert-type questionnaire with five choices: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree (See Appendix B, C, and D).

The questionnaire consisted of three sections. In completing the first sections of the questionnaire, subjects were asked to give demographic information concerning age, major, race and gender. Participants were asked to respond to an eight-item instrument exploring educator and counselor perceptions about gay and lesbian youth, which was the second portion of the survey. Examples of survey items included, I would be comfortable teaching a gay or lesbian student in my classroom. The last section of the survey provided open-ended questions which allowed educators and counselors to determine possible strategies for intervention with homosexual students, the impact of the mass media, and whether the mass media portrays homosexual in a positive or negative manner.

Administration of the Questionnaire

Educators and counselors were contacted through the mail and given a questionnaire packet. Each packet included a cover letter attached to the front of the questionnaire stating the researcher's name, position, and the purpose of the study and a questionnaire. Directions for completion were printed at the beginning of the questionnaire.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This chapter addresses the data obtained through questionnaire responses and their interpretation.

A Likert-type survey was given to the preservice and inservice educators as well as counselors in the middle and high schools in the Dayton, Kettering and Miamisburg districts. A total of 300 inservice educators (100 from each school) and 58 counselors were surveyed with a return response rate of 41.34%. The survey response rate was smaller than the anticipated return rate. Reasons for the lower response rate may be due to the sensitive nature of the survey topic or time of the year. The largest group that responded were educators with undergraduate degrees in elementary education. The data were then given to a statistical analyst.

The raw scores were used to compute the t and p values as well as percentages. Based on a five point scale, scores were analyzed and recorded. A t test was performed on the data to compare educator and counselor responses and to compare gender differences with questionnaire means. All results are presented in table format.

TABLE 1
NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS BY GENDER

	Number	%
Number of females responding	72	66.7
Number of males responding	36	33.3
Totals	108	100.0

Table 1 displays the demographic information relevant to gender with 66.75 of the respondents being female, with 33.3% male. Educators and counselors were grouped to form a statistically viable sample. Since female educators were the largest group to respond it is possible that some bias may be reflected in the analysis of the results.

TABLE 2
NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS BY AGE

Age	Number	%
21-30	23	26.1
31-40	13	14.8
41-50	29	33.0
51-60	20	22.7
61-69	3	3.4
Totals	88	100.0

Table 2 shows the results of the respondents by age. Demographic information relevant to race and age was requested on the survey, however they were optional, therefore all respondents did not complete this section of the survey. The largest group to respond was in the age bracket 41-50 years with 33%. Second was the 21-30 age bracket with 26%, and third was the 51-60 age bracket with 22%. The smallest group was the 61-69 age bracket with 3%, which is understandable since most individuals retire prior to these ages.

TABLE 3
MEANS OF THE RESPONSES OF THE EIGHT QUESTIONS
BY GENDER

	Female	Male
Question 1: Our school has intervention services for gay and lesbian students.		
Mean	4.10	3.82
SD	1.11	1.17
N	62	34
Question 2: I would be comfortable teaching a gay lesbian student in my classroom.		
Mean	1.38	1.81
SD	0.64	0.92
N	72	36
Question 3: I know self-identified gay and lesbian students and feel comfortable with them		
Mean	2.64	3.00
SD	1.51	1.56
N	63	35
Question 4: I would be comfortable proposing a workshop on gay and lesbian students at a faculty meeting		
Mean	3.49	3.00
SD	1.15	1.06
N	68	36

TABLE 3
MEANS OF THE RESPONSES OF THE EIGHT QUESTIONS
BY GENDER (CONT.)

	Female	Male
Question 5 Textbooks in our school mention homosexuality in a Positive manner		
Mean	4.03	3.83
SD	1.00	1.15
N	65	35
Question 6: I would be concerned my colleagues would be suspect of my sexual orientation if I organized a gay and lesbian student organization in my school		
Mean	3.58	3.43
SD	1.25	1.36
N	69	35
Question 7: I would be willing to attend a parent-sponsored gay and lesbian student support group		
Mean	2.50	3.09
SD	1.09	1.29
N	72	34
Question 8: Lesbian and gay students find my school to be a relatively safe place		
Mean	3.47	3.12
SD	0.98	0.84
N	64	34

Table 3 provides the means of the responses of the eight questions relevant to gender. Responses to question two, seven and eight were statistically significant. Sample t tests indicated an alpha level of .10. The responses to survey question two was probing educator and counselor response to comfort levels with self-identified gay and lesbian students in the classroom. Male respondents were somewhat less comfortable than female respondents. P values of sample t tests indicated a value of .01, making this statistically significant. Question seven queried participants on their comfort level in attending a parent sponsored gay and lesbian student support group. Male respondents indicated a greater level of discomfort than female participants, which is somewhat supported in the literature. Herek (1984) lists several characteristics of those experiencing higher degrees of discomfort with homosexuals. Those harboring negative attitudes about homosexuality are more likely to have resided in the Midwest or the South, to have grown up in rural areas or small towns, and to be male, older and less well educated than those expressing more positive attitudes. Herek (1986) later concludes that males and females hold roughly similar positions on questions of morality and civil liberties, but males are more homophobic in emotional reactions to homosexuality.

TABLE 4
LISTING OF UNDERGRADUATE MAJORS OF RESPONDENTS

Code	Description	Number	%
1	Elementary Education	20	18.5
2	Science	2	1.9
3	Math	2	1.9
4	English	3	2.8
5	Social Studies	3	2.8
6	Special Education	6	5.6
7	Health/Physical Education	3	2.8
8	Foreign Language	3	2.8
9	Counseling	15	13.9
10	Business	1	0.9
11	Educational Administration	4	3.7
12	Fine Arts	2	1.9
13	Vocational	4	3.7
15	Other of Combination	8	7.4
	Blank	12	11.1
	Totals	108	100.0

Table 4 provides a listing of undergraduate majors of respondents. The largest group of respondents had majored in elementary education (18%), with 14% majoring in counseling, and 11% not responding. The rest were distributed across the fields of:

educational administration and vocational (4%), social studies, English, special education, foreign language, health and physical education (3%) with other majors represented in smaller numbers. Seven percent had other or a combination of majors.

TABLE 5
SAMPLE T TESTS TO COMPARE QUESTIONNAIRE
MEANS AND GENDER

Question	Df	t value	p value
Question #1	65.29	1.11	0.27
Question #2	52.36	-2.52	0.01
Question #3	68.55	-1.13	0.26
Question #4	77.02	-1.55	0.13
Question #5	61.87	0.88	0.38
Question #6	63.80	0.55	0.58
Question #7	56.03	-2.30	0.03
Question #8	76.29	1.85	0.07

Table 5 displays t tests to compare questionnaire means and gender. The questionnaire used a five point Likert response scale: (1) strongly agree; (2) agree; (3) neutral; (4) Disagree; and (5) strongly disagree. Examples of survey items included I would be comfortable teaching a gay or lesbian student in my classroom or I would be comfortable counseling a gay or lesbian student in my school. Three open-ended questions were included in the questionnaire.

TABLE 6
QUALITATIVE DATA SAMPLES

#	Comments
	“If I had a student who self- identified as gay or lesbian, I would...”
1.	‘treat him/her no differently than other students’
2.	‘leave it alone’
3.	‘tell them they had mental problems’
4.	Support them and provide resources for counseling, if necessary’
5.	‘not judge them but show them Christ’s love-Jesus wants all to be saved for eternal life’
6.	‘Acknowledge, accept and let them know I am available if they want to talk’
7.	‘Don’t ask, don’t tell-you’re opening a can of worms best left alone’
	“The Media portrays homosexuality in a positive/ negative way-give an example of each”
1.	‘ Ellen’ show was positive about gay people; talk shows are negative also
2.	‘Ellen’ show always focussing on how homosexuality changes you—esp. after coming out of the closet’
3.	Radio and TV people joke about it a lot; perpetuate images versus regular people
4.	Media talks a lot about the problems they have or all the attacks they get All the Jerry Falwell talk and certain Christian groups’ negative teachings.
5.	I think people are more aware of the difficulties and discrimination that the gay community endures. The Shepard case in Wyoming
6.	‘Tired of homosexuals getting a lot of attention’
7.	‘God created Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve’
8.	‘Spin City,’ ‘Ellen’ and ‘Birdcage’ – all the males and females in these shows are shown as successful positive people. Stereotypes are still present, but not as frequent.

Table six provides a qualitative analysis of representative comments of educators and counselors regarding gay and lesbian youth. The prompts were “If I had a student who self-identified as gay or lesbian, I would.” Responses ranged from leave it alone, tell them they had mental problems, to don’t ask, don’t tell, -you’re opening a can of worms best left alone.

To the prompt “ The media portrays homosexuality in a positive/negative way- give an example of each” respondents wrote, the ”Ellen” show was positive about gay people; talk shows are negative also; radio and TV people joke about it a lot; perpetuate images versus regular people; and I think people are more aware of the difficulties and discrimination that the gay community endures. The Shepard case in Wyoming is an example. Basically, participants responded in a frank manner (e.g., God created Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve), which seemed to indicate strong feelings regarding the topic of homosexuality.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The National Association for Multicultural Education added its name to the list of professional organizations that are addressing the needs of gay and lesbian youth, while multicultural scholars have broadened the umbrella of multiculturalism to be inclusive of sexual orientation (Goodman, 1996). Yet as members of the multicultural population of American schools, it is important that the needs of these students be addressed.

Gay and lesbian youth are an at-risk population, which are underserved in our schools. Sears (1992) documents a 'conspiracy of silence' that exists in schools where curricula and texts do not contain accurate and positive information. Both educators and counselors acknowledge their lack of experience and knowledge of this population, while few universities offer coursework to train professionals about this population (Dulaney and Kelly, 1982). School counselors generally do not offer supportive and confidential training to lesbian and gay youth due to a lack of training, fear of controversy, or personal homophobia (Gibson, 1989). Lack of role models and high incidences of verbal, physical, and emotional abuse places a significant number of these students at risk, not only for school failure, but also for social crisis (Walling, 1993).

The purpose of this study is to determine counselor, preservice and inservice educator perceptions regarding the educational experiences of gay and lesbian youth; survey current educational and counseling practices utilized for gay and lesbian youth; and explore whether integrating media literacy (e.g. cyberspace, television and film) throughout the curriculum will impact the learning experiences of gay and lesbian youth. This study sought explore further the following research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of preservice and inservice educators regarding the educational experiences of gay and lesbian youth?

2. What are the current educational and counseling practices utilized for gay and lesbian youth and are they effective in addressing their needs?
3. Can integrating media literacy throughout the curriculum impact the learning experiences of gay and lesbian youth?

Several factors were limitations to this study. Gender of participants was prominently apparent. The large response of female (66.7%) educators and counselors may not be representative of the entire body of educators and counselors in the community. Secondly, the sample of preservice educators was taken during a vacation period so that the sample was not as large as anticipated and was 99% female. Finally the field of media literacy is relatively new and the literature base regarding this strategy is minimal at best, which directly affected this investigation.

Summary of Results

The results of the surveys illustrated that preservice educators expressed a willingness to support and affirm gay and lesbian students, but did not feel their university training prepared them for working this population. Butler (1994) documents the direct relationship between knowledge of homosexuality and anticipated educator behaviors. Preservice educators who have received information regarding gay and lesbian youth will possibly emit more positive behaviors towards these students. With the paucity of research in this area, it definitely would be an area for future research.

Responses of counselors and inservice educators indicate they are uncomfortable addressing issues relevant to gay and lesbian youth. This is especially evident in males. The data also supports that counselors and educators would be willing to intervene on the needs of these individuals if given appropriate strategies and support. Currently there is a lack of appropriate services to meet the needs of this unique group of individuals.

Conclusions

The inclusion of media literacy in school curricula is a potential source of interventions for gay and lesbian youth. Media such as film, television/video and cyberspace provide challenging opportunities for addressing the needs of these individuals. Media literacy teaches students how to access, analyze and evaluate information from both the print and electronic media, and to communicate using a variety of media (Considine & Haley, 1999). The integration of media literacy throughout the curriculum would serve all minorities as it allows students to think critically and produce creatively. Media literacy may give gay youth a voice, while affirming them in learning contexts. Positive role models in television programming, new and effective educational videos and networking possibilities are some examples of viable strategies that could be utilized.

Implications for Educators

Gay and lesbian students are in need of affirmation in the classroom. Educators must respect and affirm all students for their individual identities, just as they must value and respect the human and civil rights of all students. Sears (1989) lists several steps necessary for educators to enhance the quality of life for gay and lesbian students:

1. Educators must examine their own attitudes towards homosexuality, seeking to educate themselves first.
2. Professionals should communicate with others about the subject of gay and lesbian people, with particular emphasis on replacing myths with accurate information. It is critical that educators communicate with school boards, community groups and parents, as well as students.
3. Educators must communicate responsiveness to gay and lesbian students through a nonjudgmental atmosphere as well as providing curricula that includes information about sexual orientation and people who are gay and lesbian.

4. Educators should promote the human and civil rights of all people within the classroom, regardless of their moral or political convictions. Enforcing student and staff conduct that prohibits verbal and physical harassment of gay and lesbian students, as well as combating fear and ignorance about AIDS are all part of ensuring an equitable education for all students.
5. Educators must encourage hiring and support for gay and lesbian educators who will be healthy role models for gay students.
6. On a national and local level, educators can contact GLSEN chapters to learn about resource media and other materials addressing the needs of gay and lesbian youth, and youth in general. Speakers from this organization would be most useful for faculty inservices as well as guest lecturers in university classrooms for preservice educators.
7. The inclusion of media and media literacy in curricula may be a potential source of support for both homosexual and heterosexual students.

Implications for Counselors

Burke (1995) lists four major implications for counselors to consider when dealing with gay and lesbian students:

1. Gay students are very reticent about seeking help with their sexual identity issues. The counseling center should appear welcoming, with posters, brochures and promotional materials reflecting the positive recognition of gay and lesbian students, as well as other minorities.
2. Gay and lesbian students are living with great fear and self-loathing as well as harassment. Slow empathetic feedback coupled with reality checks of the students' emotional status, is effective ways to enable the vital relationship of client-counselor trust.
3. The effective counselor can help the client who is ready to find sources of friendship

and association with other gay and lesbian people via local resources. Counselors should be familiar with welcoming support groups, campus organizations, affirming churches, and gay youth groups. A local gay and lesbian community center is a good source for welcoming organizations. Issues such as coming out to friends and family are particularly pressing at certain times in their lives. Here the counselor can help by encouraging the client to realize that friends and family cannot be expected to keep silent about their feelings. Also, the counselor can help the client rehearse effective “coming out communication” with parents. Counselors should also be familiar with the Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) organization, which provides literature and support groups as a resource for the client’s parents.

4. Counselors must realize that gay and lesbian students may need help with grieving, recognizing that being homosexual means adjusting and finding new ways to be honest and affirming persons.

Recommendations

Clearly there is a lack of services for gay and lesbian youth in schools. Change is occurring as educators and counselors struggle to meet the needs of these at risk students. Both Massachusetts and Connecticut have recently adopted policies that improve the school environment for gay and lesbian youth, and chapters of GLSEN appear in smaller cities across the country. However, educators and counselors are still reticent about taking proactive roles for this group of students.

While policies and laws are necessary for establishing safe schools for all students, it is critical that we train our students to respect the multicultural society. How better than to use the images, characters and ideas that permeate American culture. Using media literacy can be a way to teach critical thinking skills while providing voices to all students.

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APPENDIX A

Cover Letter

Robert M. Butts, Jr.

525 Kenilworth Avenue
Dayton, Ohio 45405-4041

Phone 277-1935

March 9, 1999

Dear Educator and/or Counselor,

I am a graduate student at the University of Dayton and am completing my thesis project on intervention strategies for gay and lesbian youth in our schools. I have enclosed a questionnaire for your input as well as a self-addressed stamped envelope for rapid return of your response.

Please return the questionnaire by April 16. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 277-1935.

Sincerely,

Bob Butts

APPENDIX B

Counselor Survey

Counselor Survey

major _____

race(optional) _____

gender _____

age(optional) _____

1 = strongly agree

2 = agree

3 = neutral

4 = disagree

5 = strongly disagree

- 1 2 3 4 5 Our school counseling offices has intervention services for gay and lesbian students.
- 1 2 3 4 5 I would be comfortable counseling a self -identified gay or lesbian student.
- 1 2 3 4 5 I know self-identified gay and lesbian students and have counseled them.
- 1 2 3 4 5 I would be comfortable proposing a workshop on gay and lesbian students at a faculty meeting.
- 1 2 3 4 5 I believe gay or lesbian students should be encouraged to change their sexual orientation through counseling.
- 1 2 3 4 5 I would be concerned my colleagues would be suspect of my sexual orientation, if I organized a gay and lesbian student organization in my school.
- 1 2 3 4 5 I would be willing to attend a parent-sponsored gay and lesbian student support group.
- 1 2 3 4 5 Lesbian and gay students find my school to be a relatively safe environment.
-

If I had a student who had identified themselves as gay or lesbian, I would _____

The mass media portrays homosexuality in a positive manner. yes no

Provide an example. _____

The mass media portrays homosexuality in a negative manner. yes no

Provide an example. _____

APPENDIX C

Preservice Educators Survey

APPENDIX C

Preservice Educators Survey

major _____

race(optional) _____

gender _____

age(optional) _____

1 = strongly agree

2 = agree

3 = neutral

4 = disagree

5 = strongly disagree

- 1 2 3 4 5 I know self-identified gay and lesbian students and I feel comfortable with them.
- 1 2 3 4 5 Our university is sensitive to the needs of gay and lesbian students.
- 1 2 3 4 5 I would be comfortable teaching a gay or lesbian student in my classroom.
- 1 2 3 4 5 I would ensure that my classroom library had textbooks regarding homosexuality.
- 1 2 3 4 5 Gay and lesbian students should be treated like any other *diverse*(e.g. racial, ethnic, disabled) group.
- 1 2 3 4 5 My university training has prepared me with the appropriate skills to address the needs (educational and social) of gay and lesbian students.
- 1 2 3 4 5 My university training has prepared me with the appropriate skills to address the needs (educational and social) of **all** students.

If I had a student who had identified themselves as gay or lesbian, I would _____

The mass media portrays homosexuality in a positive manner.

yes

no

Provide an example. _____

The mass media portrays homosexuality in a negative manner.

yes

no

Provide an example. _____

APPENDIX D

Inservice Educators Survey

Inservice Educators Survey

major_____

race(optional)_____

gender_____

age(optional)_____

- 1 = strongly agree
 2 = agree
 3 = neutral
 4 = disagree
 5 = strongly disagree

- 1 2 3 4 5 Our school has intervention services for gay and lesbian students.
- 1 2 3 4 5 I would be comfortable teaching a gay or lesbian student in my classroom.
- 1 2 3 4 5 I know self-identified gay and lesbian students and I feel comfortable with them.
- 1 2 3 4 5 I would be comfortable proposing a workshop on gay and lesbian students at a faculty meeting.
- 1 2 3 4 5 Textbooks in our schools mention homosexuality in a positive manner.
- 1 2 3 4 5 I would be concerned my colleagues would be suspect of my sexual orientation, if I organized a gay and lesbian student organization in my school.
- 1 2 3 4 5 I would be willing to attend a parent-sponsored gay and lesbian student support group.
- 1 2 3 4 5 Lesbian and gay students find my school to be a relatively safe environment.

If I had a student who had identified themselves as gay or lesbian, I would_____

The mass media portrays homosexuality in a positive manner. yes no
 Provide an example. _____

The mass media portrays homosexuality in a negative manner. yes no
 Provide an example. _____

APPENDIX E

Sears' Index of Homophobia

Sears' Index of Homophobia Survey

- 1 = strongly agree
- 2 = agree
- 3 = neutral
- 4 = disagree
- 5 = strongly disagree

1. I would feel comfortable working closely with a male homosexual.
2. I would enjoy attending social functions at which homosexuals were present.
3. I would feel uncomfortable if I learned that my neighbor was homosexual.
4. I would feel disappointed if I learned that my child was a homosexual.
5. I would feel I had failed as a parent if I learned my child was gay.
6. I would feel comfortable if I learned that my teacher was a lesbian.
7. I would feel at ease talking with a homosexual person at a party.